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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Sixteenth session
13-31 January 1997

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS SIXTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Aurora Javate DE DIOS (Philippines)

II. ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS

A. States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. On 31 January 1997, the closing date of the sixteenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, there were 154 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York in March 1980. In accordance with article 27, the Convention entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. A list of States parties to the Convention is contained in annex I to the present report.

B. Opening of the session

3. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held its sixteenth session at United Nations Headquarters from 13 to 31 January 1997. The Committee held .. plenary meetings (.....) and its two working groups held .. meetings.

4. The session was opened by the Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Ivanka Corti (Italy), who had been elected at the fourteenth session of the Committee, in January 1995.

5. In her opening statement, Ms. Angela E. V. King, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, welcomed the new members of the Committee elected at the ninth meeting of the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in February 1996, and congratulated the five new members who had been elected at that meeting. She expressed her gratitude to the experts whose terms had ended in 1996.

6. She said the sixteenth session of the Committee came at an important time in the life of the United Nations, just after the appointment of the new Secretary-General and at the beginning of the year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women. It also came after an important cycle of United Nations conferences that had solidified links between all parts of the United Nations system, Member States, civil society and non-governmental organizations, setting the stage for further consolidating action and implementation by those actors.

7. She stated that the Committee was encouraged by the steady increase in the number of States that had ratified or acceded to the Convention; that number had reached 154, making universal ratification by the year 2000 an achievable goal. She explained that although the Convention continued to be subject to a large number of reservations, some of which were far-reaching, progress had also been achieved in that regard. She referred to General Assembly resolution 51/68 of 12 December 1996, in which the Assembly urged States to limit the extent of any reservation they lodged to ensure that no reservations were incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention or otherwise incompatible with international treaty law and to review their reservations regularly, with a view to withdrawing them. Referring to the Committee's meeting time as provided in article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, she recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/202 of 22 December 1995, had approved an amendment to that article which was subject to the approval of two thirds of the States parties to the Convention. As at 10 January 1997, 11 States parties had accepted the amendment. She further explained that in its resolution 51/68, the General Assembly had approved the Committee's holding, in the interim, two sessions annually, each of three weeks' duration. She informed the Committee that this arrangement would begin with the seventeenth session of the Committee, which would be held from 7 to 25 July 1997, preceded by a pre-session working group from 30 June to 3 July 1997.

8. The Director described positive steps that were being taken by the Secretariat, including encouraging States parties that had not submitted reports to the Committee to do so in a timely fashion, and measures that would encourage States parties to act in the spirit of the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women and regularize their reporting obligations by the year 2000. She also indicated that concrete efforts continued to be made to develop a complaints mechanism in the form of an optional protocol to the Convention. She recalled that at its fortieth session, in 1996, an in-parallel open-ended working group of the Commission on the Status of Women had discussed the elements of such a protocol, on the basis of suggestion 7 made by the

Committee at its fourteenth session, in 1995. The working group would continue its work at the Commission's forty-first session.

9. Under agenda item 8, she proposed that the Committee take up, in a preliminary way, the revised draft of the rules of procedure, which would then be taken up in detail at its seventeenth session. The Committee, at its present session, would discuss the question of the Committee's relations with non-governmental organizations and the working methods of the Committee. It would also be considering its working relations with other human rights treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, and country rapporteurs. She wished the Committee well in its efforts to monitor the implementation of the Convention and to develop general recommendations as an important tool, noting that at the present session it would continue its drafting of a general recommendation on articles 7 and 8.

C. Attendance

10. All members of the Committee attended the sixteenth session, with the exception of Ms. Desiree P. Bernard, Ms. Sunaryati Hartono and Ms. Kongit Sinegiorgis. Ms. Mervat Tallawy attended from 17 to .. January, Ms. Ginko Sato from .. to .. January and Ms. Yung-Chung Kim from 13 to 17 January 1997.

11. A list of the members of the Committee, together with an indication of the duration of their terms of office, appears in annex II to the present report.

D. Solemn declaration

12. At the opening of the sixteenth session, before assuming their functions, the newly elected members, Ms. Ayse Feride Acar (Turkey), Ms. Yolanda Ferrer Gómez (Cuba), Ms. Aída González Martínez (Mexico), Ms. Yung-Chung Kim (Republic of Korea) and Ms. Anne Lise Ryel (Norway), and the six re-elected members, Ms. Carlota Bustelo (Spain), Ms. Silvia R. Cartwright (New Zealand), Ms. Aurora Javate de Dios (Philippines), Ms. Salma Khan (Bangladesh), Ms. Ahoua Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) and Ms. Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling (Germany), made the solemn declaration as provided for under rule 10 of the rules of procedure of the Committee.

E. Election of officers

13. At its 310th meeting, on 13 January 1997, the Committee elected the following officers for a term of two years (1997-1998) by acclamation, in accordance with article 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and rules 13 and 14 of the Committee's rules of procedure: Ms. Salma Khan (Bangladesh), Chairperson; Ms. Charlotte Abaka (Ghana), Ms. Carlota Bustelo (Spain) and Ms. Miriam Estrada (Ecuador), Vice-Chairpersons; and Ms. Aurora Javate de Dios (Philippines), Rapporteur.

F. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

14. The Committee considered the provisional agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/1997/1) at its 310th meeting, on 13 January 1997. The agenda as adopted was as follows:

1. Opening of the session.

2. Solemn declaration by the new members of the Committee.

3. Election of officers.

4. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work.

5. Report of the Chairperson on the activities undertaken between the fifteenth and sixteenth sessions of the Committee and consideration of the report of the seventh meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies and action taken by the General Assembly concerning treaty bodies.

6. Consideration of reports submitted by States parties and article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

7. Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

8. Ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee.

9. Provisional agenda for the seventeenth session.

10. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its sixteenth session.

G. Report of the pre-session working group

15. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had decided, at its ninth session,[1] to convene a pre-session working group for five days before each session to prepare lists of questions relating to second and subsequent periodic reports that would be considered by the Committee at the session. The Committee decided that its members should submit to the Secretariat the draft questions on specific countries and articles of the Convention prior to the meeting of the working group.

16. The Committee decided at its fifteenth session that the following four members representing the different regional groups would participate in the working group:

Ivanka Corti (Europe)

Tendai Ruth Bare (Africa)

Aurora Javate de Dios (Asia and the Pacific)

Miriam Estrada (Latin America and the Caribbean).

17. In accordance with the provisional agenda of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1997/1), the working group prepared lists of issues and questions for five States parties to be sent to the following Governments: Canada, Denmark, Philippines, Turkey and Venezuela.

18. The pre-session working group noted that the majority of the reports it reviewed followed the Committee's guidelines for the presentation of reports. This allowed the working group to assess the progress made by States parties in the implementation of the Convention since the previous report to the Committee. The working group appealed to States parties to continue to follow the Committee's guidelines for the presentation of reports so as to expedite the work of the pre-session group and to allow it to analyse the progress of individual States parties in greater depth. The group also noted that the majority of the reports to be reviewed by the pre-session working group had been prepared prior to the Fourth World Conference on Women. Thus, the revised reporting guidelines provided by the Committee and revised at its fifteenth session did not apply. Nevertheless, the pre-session working group took the opportunity to raise questions relating to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the commitments undertaken by each State party during the Conference.

19. At its .... meeting, on .. January 1997, the Chairperson of the pre-session working group introduced the report of the group (CEDAW/C/1997/CRP.1) in which she said ...

H. Composition and organization of work of the working groups

20. At its 311th meeting, on 13 January 1997, the Committee agreed on the composition of its two standing working groups: working group I, to consider ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, and working group II, to consider ways and means of implementing article 21 of the Convention.

21. Working group I was composed of the following members of the Committee: Ivanka Corti, Miriam Estrada, Yolanda Ferrer Gómez, Aída González Martínez, Salma Khan, Ahoua Ouedraogo, Hanna Beate Schöpp-Schilling and Lin Shangzhen.

22. Working group II was composed of the following members of the Committee: Charlotte Abaka, Ayse Feride Acar, Emna Aouij, Tendai Ruth Bare, Carlota Bustelo, Silvia R. Cartwright, Ivanka Corti, Aurora Javate de Dios, Yolanda Ferrer Gómez, Aída González Martínez, Anne Lise Ryel, Carmel Shalev, Yung-Chung Kim and Salma Khan.

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38 and corrigendum (A/45/38 and Corr.1), paras. 28-31.